

ARIZONA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

FACT SHEET

Arizona Public Charter School Goals: *Enhancing Pupil Progress; Increasing Parental Choice*

As of March 2003, Arizona has 300 charters operating 462 school sites. Over 60,000 thousand students are enrolled in charter schools for the 2002-2003 school year.

Arizona Charter Schools comprise seven of the top ten scoring schools by grade in the language subtest of the Spring 2002 SAT 9 test, five out of ten in the math subtest and seven out of ten top scoring schools in the reading subtest.

All charter schools must teach to the Arizona Academic Standards. In addition, all charter schools must have an assessment plan, including AIMS and SAT9, to measure pupil progress toward meeting State standards.

Charter schools are drawing heavily from the state's minority communities. The percentage of Native American and African American students in charter schools is higher than that in the total public school population according to the annual report from the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the 2001-2002 school year.

The average length of a charter school year is 186 days; the average pay for charter school teachers is roughly \$2,000 higher than traditional public schools.

Four of the country's 250 Core Knowledge schools are Arizona Charter Schools; Arizona's only Direct Instruction School is a charter school; there are over 30 Montessori charter schools. Arizona's charter schools also include 3 public Waldorf inspired schools.

Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools are on "current year" funding. Each May all charter schools submit an estimated enrollment that includes the school/district of last attendance

Student mobility and dropout rates are both very high in Arizona charter and traditional public schools. The Arizona Department of Education's Student Accountability Information System (SAIS) will help combat these problems by electronically tracking mobility and dropouts for the first time. SAIS will also be instrumental in assuring precise student counts and measuring year over year student progress.

The three sponsoring entities in Arizona (the State Board of Education, the State Board for Charter Schools, and school districts) are statutorily mandated with "administrative oversight" of the schools they sponsor.

Findings from the study "Does Charter School Attendance Improve Test Scores? The Arizona Results" released in April of 2001:

- Arizona's public charter students improve more than traditional district students in reading and about the same on math.
- Public charter students improve on the test the longer they stay in a charter school.
- The improvement public charter students make on the test, even when they move from one public charter to another or from a public charter to a traditional district school, is greater than the improvement traditional district students make when they stay in the same traditional district school for three consecutive years.

Two of three schools receiving excellent achievement profiles in the fall of 2002 were charter schools.